THE

BISHOP OF LINCOLN's

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1780.

Die Mercurij, 2° Februarij, 1780.

ORDERED by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament aſſembled, That the Thanks of this Houſe be, and are hereby given to the Lord Biſhop of *Lincoln*, for the Sermon by him preached before this Houſe on *Monday* laſt, in the Abbey-Church, *Weſtminſter:* And he is hereby deſired to cauſe the ſame to be forthwith printed and publiſhed.

ASHLEY COWPER,
Cler. Parliamentor.

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A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

IN

THE ABBEY-CHURCH, WESTMINSTER,

ON

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1780,

694.i.19
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Being the Day appointed to be obſerved as the Day of the MARTYRDOM of King CHARLES I.

K Thurlow

BY THOMAS LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

LONDON,

PRINTED FOR W. OWEN, BETWEEN THE TEMPLE-GATES, FLEET-STREET

MDCCLXXX.

1 PETER ii. 17.

HONOUR THE KING.

THE duty of ſubmiſſion to authority is one of the plaineſt doctrines taught in holy writ. The government under which the Iſraelites lived was at firſt a pure theocracy. The God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, took them under his immediate protection, fulfilled the covenant made with the firſt patriarch, and gave them poſſeſſion of the promiſed land. Obedience to the divine commands was the grateful return expected from this choſen people. When diſcontent and ingratitude prevailed, and they capriciouſly preferred the ſceptre of an earthly monarch to the all-powerful arm of JEHOVAH; the anointed kings of Iſrael and Judah, who were in the ſtricteſt ſenſe vicegerents of heaven, became entitled to the honour and obedience of their reſpective ſubjects. Their perſons were accounted ſacred: and the Amalekite who was inſtrumental in taking away the life of the firſt king of Iſrael, though at his own requeſt, was ſentenced by David to immediate death, as a juſt puniſhment of his preſumption.

AFTER the conqueſt of Judea, and the reduction of it to a Roman province, its tributary kings were compelled to acknowledge a ſuperior lord; and the allegiance of the Jew was transferred from the ancient line of royalty in the houſe of David to the Roman emperor. A people, turbulent and prone to ſedition under the government of their native monarchs, could ill brook ſubmiſſion to the imperial edicts of an heathen prince. When motives of conſcience were pleaded againſt the payment of that mortifying tribute with which they connected the idea of ſervitude, the goſpel inſtructs us how far they were juſtified in their evaſive plea. The divine Founder of our religion "perceived "their wickedneſs *," and, without entering into a diſcuſſion of the right, or uſurpation, of the civil power, enforced the general duty of ſubmiſſion in theſe words, "Render unto Cæſar the "things that are Cæſar's, and unto God the things that are "God's †."

THE Apoſtles of our bleſſed Lord, in their ſeveral epiſtles to the churches which they had planted, imitate the example of their great Maſter, and invariably purſue the ſame plan. St. Paul pronounces government to be an inſtitution or "ordinance of "God ‡;" and on this ground exhorts "every ſoul to be ſub-"ject to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, "the powers that be are ordained of God ‖." If we interpret the word—POWERS—to denote the ſupreme civil authority generally,

* Matt. xxii. 18. † Matt. xxii. 21. ‡ Rom. xiii. 2. ‖ Rom. xiii. 1.

or

or the perſons at that time actually exerciſing ſuch authority, the doctrine will have the ſame import,—that the new convert to Chriſtianity, whether Jew or Gentile, by becoming a ſubject of Chriſt's kingdom, could claim no exemption from the ties of ſubordination and ſubmiſſion, which, as a ſubject of the Roman empire, he was antecedently bound to obſerve. The ſame doctrine is delivered by St. Peter. — "Submit yourſelves to every ordi- "nance of man for the Lord's ſake: whether it be to the king, "as ſupreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by "him *. Fear God: honour the king †."

THE duty of obedience to magiſtrates is hence clear and expreſs — of general obedience, in an undefined degree, without reſpect to extraordinary poſſibilities of occurrence, and without a deſcription of any preferable form of polity, which is left to be determined by the local circumſtances of each particular country. With theſe curious queſtions the ſcriptures intermeddle not. They declare the end and deſign of government to be the good and welfare of the governed — that it was inſtituted "for the "puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do "well ‡." They declare the duty of obedience to be a debt of gratitude due for the benefits of protection to the protecting powers, who "are God's miniſters, attending continually upon this very thing §." Thus is the felicity of all his creatures an object of his providential care: — thus benevolently does Chriſ-

* 1 Pet. ii, 13, 14. † 1 Pet. ii. 17. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 14. § Rom. xiii. 6.

tianity

tianity provide, not only for the eternal, but alſo for the temporal, intereſt of mankind during their pilgrimage on earth, by pointing out wherein the true welfare of them, as ſocial beings, conſiſts; and by enforcing with the awful ſanctions of religion the reciprocal duties of protection and allegiance, the grand foundation of mutual happineſs to prince and people.

THAT a departure from theſe ſalutary principles is generally attended with unhappineſs to both, the hiſtory of our own country too fatally exemplifies. The return of this devout ſolemnity recalls to our memory a dreadful ſcene of popular frenzy, tearing up the foundations of government, — overwhelming in the ruins of civil war the whole fabric of the conſtitution,—and terminating in a monſtrous deed, which has been, for its enormity, ſtamped with deſerved infamy by the language of the laws, and made the annual ſubject of a national humiliation.

REMOVED, as we are, at a diſtance from this ſcene of anarchy, we are better enabled to inveſtigate without prejudice the cauſes which concurred in the production of ſo fatal an effect. By contemplating the Engliſh conſtitution, as it appears in the annals of its earlier hiſtory;—by comparing it with the improvements which the preciſion of ſucceeding legiſlators has introduced into this intereſting ſubject, we ſhall be able to aſcertain more clearly the meaſures of guilt in the parties concerned; and, from a review of their conduct, ſhall learn — to revere and ſupport the throne, the key-ſtone of that admired fabric, which the

wiſdom

wiſdom of ages hath brought to perfection, — and thus to perform with unſhaken loyalty that branch of our Chriſtian duty, which commands us to HONOUR THE KING.

THAT the power of the crown has undergone many alterations from the Era of the Conqueſt, ſome favourable, others repugnant, to the liberty of the ſubject, cannot be diſputed. Our Saxon anceſtors, who incorporated with the Norman adventurers, cheriſhed and kept alive the ſpirit of freedom, which had well nigh been extinguiſhed by the tyrannical laws of the Conqueror. The feudal ſyſtem, adapted in its origin to the policy of a martial people, and tending in its ſtructure to concenter in the chieftain a deſpotic authority, produced HERE in its eſtabliſhment a diſſimilar effect. When feuds became hereditary, the powerful barons began ſoon to feel the importance of their ſituation: a ſpirit of independence, too, pervaded inſenſibly the inferior ranks, and circulating through all the branches of the feudal ſubordination, produced in Magna Charta a fair ſhoot of genuine liberty; which, though checked ſometimes in its growth by the depreſſions of regal ambition, or the ſtorms of popular commotion, hath nevertheleſs been ſecretly cultivated by the foſtering care of Britons in ſucceſſive generations, and at laſt improved to maturity.

IN its progreſs to this maturity, we may remark one circumſtance, that had almoſt proved fatal to its exiſtence, and contributed, perhaps more than any other cauſe, to lay a foundation

for the unhappy conteſt between prince and people in the laſt century. A diſputed ſucceſſion to the throne had involved the kingdom in a deſtructive civil war, in which the nobility were almoſt extinct, and the commons deprived of their martial leaders, who had ſo often aſſiſted them to repreſs the encroaching prerogatives of the crown. At the cloſe of this ſcene of bloodſhed, the prince who aſcended the throne, dreading the revival of that powerful ariſtocracy, undermined by policy, what experience had taught him could not be ſubdued by force. By the introduction of ſome politic alterations into the laws concerning property, he encouraged the alienation and the partition of thoſe immenſe feuds, which had enabled the nobles to bring into the field ſuch armies of military vaſſals. By uſing all the advantages which this new order of things preſented, he imperceptibly accompliſhed, what his predeceſſor had vainly attempted; and tranſmitted to his ſon an authority more abſolute, than the form of this conſtitution, or the genius of liberty could endure.

HENCE arbitrary courts, the diſpenſing power, and other engines of tyranny in the hands of the Henries, took, if not their commencement, at leaſt a great deal of that aggravated condition in which they were delivered down to Elizabeth. The general affection of the Engliſh for their Queen, who derived much of her popularity from the adverſe fortune ſhe experienced in the early part of her life, diminiſhed in proportion their ſenſe of feeling. The brilliant ſucceſſes of her reign hid from the public eye thoſe frequent encroachments of arbitrary power, which

mark

mark the adminiſtration of this deſpotic, though admired Princeſs.

THE ſucceſſor of Elizabeth, dazzled with the ſplendour of an inheritance that flattered his idea of the divine right and abſolute power of monarchy, diſplayed with learned vanity thoſe dangerous claims, which a deeper policy would have ſtudiouſly concealed. Theſe claims unacknowledged ſcattered the ſeeds of future diſcord.

AND *now*, when the minds of men began to be enlightened;—when, among other branches of literature, the ſtudy of hiſtory and the Engliſh conſtitution became more general;—when the art of printing had facilitated the progreſs of ſcience;—when the Reformation had emancipated the kingdom from religious tyranny;—when the Commons, poſſeſſed of extenſive property, no longer looked up to the nobility for protection, but grew daily ſenſible of their increaſing weight, and importance in the ſtate;—at this criſis, the young and inexperienced Prince, whoſe ſingular fate every good man muſt lament, aſcended the throne of his anceſtors, under peculiar diſadvantages and difficulties; to extricate himſelf from which, he was too eaſily perſuaded by the evil counſellors, who ſurrounded him, to have an improvident recourſe to the ſame illegal maxims and meaſures of government, which tarniſhed more illuſtrious reigns.

BUT, whilſt the love of truth diſdains to conceal or palliate this miſconduct, juſtice to the memory of an unfortunate Prince demands, that we contemplate his character in another and more favourable point of view. To an ingenuous mind a ſenſe of infirmities is painful, and, when aided by religious fear, the parent of contrition. Conſider him in this light, and we behold the Chriſtian monarch lamenting the errours into which he had been betrayed; acceding to the counſels of parliament; ſurrendering every illegal claim, and reducing the prerogative within its juſt bounds. The *Noble Hiſtorian* *, whoſe regard for the conſtitution can only be equalled by his fidelity to the crown, commends with the warmth of a true patriot many of the laws enacted in the firſt ſeſſion of the long parliament; and cloſes the third book of his hiſtory with the following reflection:

"THAT they will be acknowledged by an uncorrupted "poſterity, to be everlaſting monuments of the King's friendly "and fatherly affection to his people, and ſuch an obligation "of repoſe and truſt from his Majeſty in the hearts of his ſub-"jects, that no expreſſions of piety, duty and confidence from them "could have been more than a ſufficient return on their parts."

BUT the ſpirit of diſſenſion had now gone abroad; and inſtead of this expected return to his fatherly affection, he met with nothing but diſloyalty, and diſtruſt. The prevalent party,

* Lord Clarendon.

intoxicated

intoxicated with a love of power, no ſooner perceived in him a flexible diſpoſition, than they began with increaſed vehemence to reiterate their complaints of tyranny. The republican ſpirit, which, in conjunction with the ſpirit of puritaniſm, had ſecretly diffuſed the poiſon of diſaffection to the eſtabliſhed government of church and ſtate, now burſt forth. The leaders availing themſelves of the efficacy of this levelling principle, ſo adapted to their purpoſe, inſtructed the populace where to direct their ſeditious invectives; whilſt they themſelves ſtood prepared to ſecond their endeavours; to tear down every fence which a reverence for Majeſty had planted round the throne; to annihilate every remaining branch of the prerogative, and to wreſt by tumultuous force out of the hands of royalty the whole executive power of the ſtate. So unexpected a convulſion aſtoniſhed all ranks of people. Thoſe, whom a love for their country had at firſt prompted to join the popular party, found their paſſions ſo inflamed by the ardour of controverſy, that they knew not where to draw the boundary, nor how to diſengage themſelves from counſels, in which they had taken ſo conſiderable a ſhare. Some few, who ſaw into the fatal tendency of theſe counſels, preſerved their integrity amidſt the conflict; and with the bravery of untainted loyalty defended the cauſe of injured Majeſty by the moſt weighty arguments drawn from hiſtory and the fundamental laws of the conſtitution; till overpowered by numbers and ſilenced by clamour, they were compelled to conſult their perſonal ſafety, and to withdraw from ſcenes which threatened univerſal ruin to the kingdom. The

moſt atrocious, ſtimulated by a reſtleſs ambition, entertained hopes of future greatneſs in the proſpect of impending civil war, and accordingly rendered ineffectual every propoſal for an accommodation.

Religion in the mean time, that ſacred friend to union and peace, was, by a ſingular perverſion, employed to aid the cauſe of ſedition and rebellion. Hypocriſy, arrayed in the robe of Piety, became perfect in the habitual exerciſe of the arts of deception. The pulpit, the ſenate, and even the camp, afforded in ſucceſſion a theatre for the diſplay of her powers, and alternately reſounded with the declamations of falſehood, impoſture, and treaſon. Theſe in their turn operating on the diſtempered imaginations of men, produced a gloomy ſpirit of fanaticiſm, which, under the fancied impreſſions of ſuperior direction, ſanctified every deed of wickedneſs, and ſerved the more effectually to adminiſter the poiſonous ingredients which Hypocriſy had prepared. To a combination of theſe principles, however contradictory, may be referred many of the celebrated characters of that age:—the character of ONE in particular, the magnitude of whoſe crimes has rendered him conſpicuous, and whoſe elevation on the ruins of liberty was not leſs owing to the dark duplicity of his deſigns, than to the ſtrong impulſe of the fanatical ſpirit, which ſo rapidly promoted the execution of them.

To

To a combination of theſe principles may be referred the precipitate demolition of our religious eſtabliſhment, which fell the firſt ſacrifice to popular fury. The fathers of the church were faithful to the crown, and zealous ſupporters of the conſtitution: hence they were excluded from their ſhare in the public councils, and their order was voted uſeleſs. The clergy were in general a learned body and exemplary in their lives; but they "honoured the King:" and hence they were denominated ſcandalous miniſters; were harraſſed, ejected from their churches, and impriſoned.

To the ſame cauſe likewiſe may be referred that additional wound given to the conſtitution, the abolition of the Houſe of Peers. The Nobles, by their birthright counſellors of the crown, are peculiarly intereſted in the preſervation and ſupport of that fountain of honour: by the dignity and juriſdiction annexed to their rank, it is their province more immediately to ſtudy and defend the conſtitution, of which they are the hereditary guardians. Nor ought it ever to be forgotten, that ſo long as the power and influence of this Houſe remained, the overthrow of liberty could not be completed. When this firm pillar of the ancient edifice was removed, the whole fabric tottered from its baſis.

Nothing now remained for the workers of rebellion to accompliſh, but that execrable act, which filled up the meaſure of their iniquity. So long as their Sovereign lived, though

though dethroned and impriſoned, their own ſafety could not be enſured from inſurrections in his favour. He ſtill poſſeſſed the affectionate attachment and reverence of a large part of the nation; and his ſingular misfortunes, and truly pious and Chriſtian reſignation, began to excite a general compaſſion. Enthuſiaſm alone was hardened enough to reſiſt the impreſſions of pity for majeſty in diſtreſs. The gloomy mind of the fanatic had long been bewildered by its deluſions, and gradually prepared for the perpetration of ſome atrocious deed. The public trial and execution of a ſovereign prince ſuited, by unparalleled enormity, the daring and remorſeleſs ſpirit which actuated theſe ſons of Belial. And the completion of this laſt act of wickedneſs, by ſuch a profanation of the forms of juſtice, ſuch a violation of every principle of humanity, in open defiance of the laws of God and man, proclaims at once the conſummation of their guilt, and the final ruin of the conſtitution.

The review of theſe tranſactions will furniſh ſome uſeful leſſons of inſtruction.

The patrons of civil liberty, a bleſſing ſo juſtly dear to Britons, may learn from hence, that they can never endanger the poſſeſſion of it ſo effectually, as by purſuing irregular and unconſtitutional means of preſerving it. The ſecurity of liberty ariſes from regulations of ancient uſage and preſcription. In a limited monarchy theſe regulations have aſſigned to the ſeveral conſtituent parts of government their reſpective offices and employments.

ments. The liberty of the whole is owing to the union and compacted firmneſs of the parts. Arbitrary power, which cruſhes liberty, is the effect of diſunion, and a diſſolution of the whole into ſeparate intereſts. When a breach is once made, and an illegal authority, unknown to the conſtitution, aſſumed by one branch, it is evidently the duty, as well as intereſt, of the other branches, to purſue healing meaſures by a judicious application of the powers veſted in them to rectify what has been done amiſs. But the paſſions of mankind, and the natural love of dominion, are apt to interfere in queſtions of this kind, and, inſtead of healing, to corrode, the wound.

ANOTHER leſſon of inſtruction from the preceding hiſtory is this. By reflecting on the ſad effects of a tyrannical democracy, which ended in a total loſs of Liberty, we may learn to ſet a juſt value on the revival of this bleſſing, and the reſettlement of the conſtitution upon a ſolid and ſtable foundation.

THE Britiſh conſtitution, compared with the rule of government in other ſtates, whether ancient or modern, has a decided ſuperiority in its favour. The title to this pre-eminence is founded upon that preciſion, with which the rights of the executive and legiſlative powers are now aſcertained. It is this which enſures to both an undiſputed poſſeſſion of their reſpective privileges, and leaves to the Britiſh ſubject a clear enjoyment of perfect liberty, no longer liable to be diſturbed by the uncertainty of indetermi-

nate claims. Power, thus defined and regulated by law, has an undoubted right to obedience, and to an habitual reverence and ſubmiſſion through the ſeveral ſubordinations of civil life. And when it is conſidered, that this ſubordination is an appointment of Providence, and that a reverence of authority is ordained by the laws of God as well as of man, a ſuperior obligation ariſes to the performance of this duty. Nor can we ſhew a proper ſenſe of the bleſſing of liberty, thus happily ſecured by law, or the value of ſuch an admirable conſtitution, without it. To ſtrengthen the hands of government, not only by a prompt obedience to the laws, but by a liberal and firm ſupport of the common intereſt, is the ſureſt teſtimony of public virtue. The beauty, as well as vigour, of the conſtitution, reſults from this union of intereſt, ſeconded by an union of ſentiment. To Divide, is neceſſarily to weaken it. To ſuggeſt, without evident proof, that any, who participate equally the bleſſings of liberty under the preſent happy eſtabliſhment, are capable of ſteadily purſuing a plan for the ſubverſion of it; — to depreciate the guardians of public ſafety, upon whoſe labours and credit the morals, ſecurity, and ſtrength of our country depend; — to preſage dreadful conſequences from facts and deſigns, the exiſtence of which is imaginary; — to declaim for liberty in the language and ſpirit of perſecution, and openly to lament the loſs, in terms which ſhow the moſt extended poſſeſſion, of it; — is ſuch an affront to good ſenſe and honeſty, as muſt carry with it its own condemnation. Such conduct is not reconcileable to the character of good

ſubjects,

ſubjects, or good Chriſtians; and the immorality of it increaſes in proportion to the number and ſuperior value of the bleſſings thus wantonly abuſed.

Let us then, as members of the ſame community, protected by the ſame laws; as partakers of the ſame benefits in the goſpel of Chriſt Jeſus; as ſubjects of the ſame gracious king, who rejoiceth in the proſperity of his people; — united by theſe endearing obligations, let us ſhew ourſelves deſerving of the bleſſings we inherit. Let our acknowledgment of them appear in thankfulneſs to Heaven, in obedience to the laws, and in unſhaken fidelity to our ſovereign. The moſt diſtinguiſhed characters have added luſtre to their virtues by loyalty to the throne. And while the authority of the crown is exerciſed with honour, integrity, and clemency, let us unite in making ſuch returns of gratitude and affection, as become thoſe, who reverence religion, and love their country, — who "fear God, and honour the king." "So "ſhall the Lord be entreated for the land *;" — "So ſhall our "Jeruſalem be built as a city that is at unity in itſelf †."

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 25. † Pſalm cxxii. 3.

THE END.